

but with no ability to take the guns away from her husband or to stop him from buying a gun, she was found dead.

The reality is we can do something about it. In fact, some of these States I am talking about are doing something about it themselves. Louisiana, which has a reputation as a State with a pretty strong history of gun ownership, has done something about it. The State legislature has passed a law allowing for a process that someone convicted of a domestic violence crime can have their guns taken away. Wisconsin has done the same, a State with a similar, pretty robust history of gun ownership.

It just makes sense that if someone has been convicted of a domestic violence crime, if they have a restraining order taken out against them because they got violent with their spouse, that is the exact time at which society needs to step in, law enforcement needs to step in and separate those guns from that individual. The statistics back that up. In States, for instance, that have just basic background check protections, women are 38 percent less likely to be killed by guns. These laws matter when it comes to keeping women alive at the hands of abusive spouses.

Mariann O'Shields died just a couple weeks ago in Spartanburg, SC. Not only had she taken out a restraining order against her husband Robert O'Shields, but she had gone the extra step to bring her and her kids—her daughter to a domestic violence shelter. She was staying in a shelter, but her husband tracked her down at the shelter, and just after she had dropped off her child at a bus stop she was killed. The staff at the safe home, if you can imagine, were paralyzed by this crime. The director said:

My staff and I are totally devastated. It is your worst nightmare when you work with a shelter. I don't think that there is anything we could have done to protect her.

That is right. There wasn't anything more that domestic violence shelter could have done to protect Mariann O'Shields, but there is something we can do. We have all sorts of disagreements about the future of gun laws in this country, and I understand in the foreseeable future we are not likely going to get a bill that expands the sales that are subject to background checks, even though 80 percent of the American public thinks we should require people to show they are not a criminal before they can buy a gun.

I wish we could get the assault weapons off the street that did the kind of damage we saw in Newtown, CT, but in the absence of getting an agreement on commonsense alternatives to current law such as bans on assault weapons and a greater scope of background checks, at least maybe we can take this specific issue, which is spouses, in particular, women who have taken out restraining orders against their husbands or spouses or boyfriends, maybe we can limit the change we can agree on to at least those situations in which women are most vulnerable, after an

episode of violence, after a threat, when they have taken out a court-ordered restraining order, maybe at that moment their spouse shouldn't be able to possess a gun. Maybe at least during those few moments the spouse shouldn't be able to go out and buy a gun. Maybe the week after Mother's Day, in the face of the heroism that women such as Gwen and Lori and Mariann showed in removing their families and themselves from violent situations, maybe we can at least listen to the voices of these handful of victims of domestic violence crimes and do something in a targeted, limited way that could in the end prevent hundreds of unnecessary deaths across this country. I have to believe that in a body of good will we can at least agree on that.

That is the reason virtually every week I try to come down to the floor and share with my colleagues some of the voices of the victims, these 31,000 a year, 2,600 a month, 86 a day who are lost to gun violence all across this country. We can do better.

I yield the floor.

I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I, along with most Americans, celebrated Mother's Day yesterday with my wife, my daughter, and my grandchildren, to express our appreciation for what mothers all over the world have done in order to help our communities. In America, we have taken action to help women in this country. I am referring to the passage of the Affordable Care Act, which has helped childbearing women and child rearing throughout the child's life, as well as the mother and the family.

Let me give some examples because I think it is good to point out where we have made progress and to celebrate what we have done to help women in America. We have taken on the arbitrary practices of private insurance companies that discriminated against women, against pregnant women, and against mothers. A woman can now choose her own OB/GYN doctor as her primary care doctor, no longer having to wait for authorization or to get a referral in order to have OB/GYN care. Women now have the absolute right to choose their own primary care doctor, including an OB/GYN.

Under the Affordable Care Act, every woman in America is guaranteed an annual well-woman visit to be able to assess their health, including mammography screening, pap smears, diabetes screening, and other preventive screenings services at no cost. That is all provided in the Affordable Care Act, so a woman can take care of her own health care needs and, in many cases,

avoiding much more costly and debilitating care. Again, this is at no cost. So there is no reason why a woman cannot take advantage of these services. HPV DNA testing is now available every 3 years under the Affordable Care Act to deal with the sexual health of women. STI counseling and HIV screening for sexually active women are now available under the Affordable Care Act. This is now guaranteed. Women don't have to go look at the fine print of an insurance policy to see whether they have coverage. Before, in most cases, they didn't have coverage. Women don't have to wait for authorization, having to show a need. These are given rights that are now available to every woman under the Affordable Care Act.

No longer can pregnancy be considered a preexisting condition. Before the passage of the Affordable Care Act, if a woman wanted to get an insurance policy, insurers excluded childbirth during the first perhaps 9 months or later. It was considered a preexisting condition. Now we have a seamless system, so women can get the type of care they need.

Why does that become so important? So they can get the necessary prenatal care in order to keep their baby healthy, to get the type of tests that are necessary.

Pregnant women can now get a gestational diabetes screening to see whether they are at high risk and, if so, they can get the type of treatment they need in order to make sure their baby is born as healthy as possible.

Prenatal care is available and it is covered, and we now have, through the Affordable Care Act, a provision we added that provides support for qualified health centers. I have visited qualified health centers in Maryland that are now providing prenatal care that wasn't there before. It is not only that we are providing coverage; we are providing access to care, so we can reduce low birth weight babies in our community. Look at the numbers of infant survival. Look at the numbers of low birth weight babies. We are improving those numbers daily because of the Affordable Care Act. To be able to prevent and discover complications during pregnancy, including preterm outcomes—all of that is now available.

Women now have access to folic acid to make sure a woman has a healthier fetus and birth. All of that is now available under the Affordable Care Act.

We help newborns and their mothers. Breast feeding has been proven to be a very strong part of a healthy infancy and for a baby. There are certain needs a mother has, including having the time to breast feed, and the cost of breast feeding, including breast pumps. That is now covered under the Affordable Care Act.

We understand the need to keep people healthier, and that is why we call it

a wellness program. No longer is it insurance just to take care of an illness or injury; it is to keep people healthy and for women particularly. We didn't do a good job for many years. We are now making up for it in the Affordable Care Act, making a huge difference.

We are giving peace of mind to women all over this country about having adequate third-party coverage so they can afford to take care of their own health and the health of their families.

Adult children can remain on parents' insurance policies until age 26. We have all received so many letters from our constituents saying: Thank goodness we have that provision. My 24-year-old never thought she would get ill. Now she has this insurance coverage so we can take care of her and keep her healthy, and when she needs health care, it is available, thanks to the Affordable Care Act.

Today millions of Americans today who didn't have it before, now have quality, affordable health insurance as a result of the Affordable Care Act. It is peace of mind. They can now carry an insurance card. I got a letter from one of my constituents saying how it felt to have an insurance card in her possession, knowing that it worked as a ticket to take care of her health care and the health care of her family.

No longer can an insurance company discriminate in ratings against women—a huge deal. The discriminatory rates were aimed against women, and we have eliminated that under the Affordable Care Act.

We have eliminated preexisting condition restrictions. I already talked about pregnancy. But it was amazing how women particularly were discriminated against because of preexisting conditions, where they couldn't get full coverage to take care of all of their needs. That is over, including for their children. Many families told us they had a child with asthma and they couldn't get full coverage. Now they can get full coverage, thanks to the Affordable Care Act. They now have peace of mind and adequate coverage to take care of their needs.

We had the end of the caps on health insurance. No longer do people have to worry: Should I do this or not? Will I hit my annual limit or my lifetime limit?

They are gone. If they need insurance, it is there to protect them. That is what insurance should do: Protect families.

So we have made a huge difference.

I am particularly proud of the prudent layperson provision for emergency care. I can't tell my colleagues how many times we had circumstances where people needed to go to the emergency room because they thought they had a true emergency with chest pain and sweating, and they would go to the emergency room. The good news was they weren't having a heart attack. The bad news is they got a bill from their insurance company telling them

that because they didn't have a heart attack they have to pay this bill. That is over. We have now legislated the prudent layperson standard so it is now right for a person to seek urgent care, and the insurance company must cover that visit for urgent care.

I could continue to list so many ways we have helped all people in this country but particularly women. It is tough enough to give birth to a baby and to raise a child. We have made it easier by taking away some of the burdens regarding our health care system.

So this past Sunday, when we celebrated Mother's Day, we could also point to a very tangible accomplishment this Congress has been able to deliver for all of our mothers in this country, and I was proud to be a part of making that a reality.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

ROSENBAUM NOMINATION

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, shortly we are going to have votes on a number of judges, and I want to call to the attention of the Senate Federal district judge Robin Rosenbaum. She has been nominated by the President to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Judicial Circuit.

The two Senators from Florida, Senator RUBIO and I, have a proud tradition in Florida of bipartisan support for our judicial nominees, and Judge Rosenbaum's selection is just another example in that 20-some-year experience in Florida of selecting our judges through a judicial nominating commission. In fact, this is the second time Florida's two Senators come together to support Robin Rosenbaum's nomination—this time for the circuit court—since we, a couple years ago, had recommended her to the President, the President chose her, and she has been a Federal district judge in the Southern District of Florida for the last couple of years. The vacancy was created by Judge Rosemary Barkett, who recently retired from the Eleventh Circuit. Judge Barkett was also a very distinguished judge from the State of Florida.

We are concerned about the alarming vacancy rate in our judiciary. The Eleventh Circuit is one of the busiest in the country. It has multiple vacancies.

Judge Rosenbaum is clearly not controversial. The two Senators are supporting her nomination. She received the ABA's highest rating—unanimously “well qualified”—and she has been approved, obviously, by the Senate Judiciary Committee. She is going

to make a fine addition to the Eleventh Circuit, and at 5:30 p.m. this afternoon she will be the first judge up for confirmation. I urge my colleagues to confirm her nomination.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

STUDENT LOAN DEBT

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, like many of my colleagues, I have attended and spoken at a number of college and law school graduations and commencements.

I had the great privilege of speaking to the graduates of Post University on Saturday and at the Quinnipiac Law School just yesterday—both wonderfully exciting and rewarding days full of celebration and pride, well-justified joy and pride in the great accomplishments of these graduates, and more than their past accomplishments, their contributions of the future. These young people are our future. I spoke to them about the challenges and responsibilities that come with the great privilege of having an education from great colleges and universities, undergraduate and law school, the opportunities for public service, to be a champion of right and responsibility, to advocate for people who need their voices and their advocacy, and the responsibilities and opportunities for public service.

Each of them has a great opportunity to give back to our country and to use that education to better all of us as well as themselves. Yet they are leaving college and law school burdened with debt that would have been unthinkable and even unimaginable a decade or so ago. The average in Connecticut is \$27,000 of debt per graduate from undergraduate education today.

What I have done over the last 2 days, over the last 2 weeks, over the past month, is really listen to our students at every level—high school as recently as Friday at Bassick High School in Bridgeport, colleges throughout the State of Connecticut—crisscrossing our State to talk on campuses, at roundtables, with students who are burdened—indeed, financially crippled with debt that would have been unthinkable and unimaginable when I was going through the same education. In those days, working to pay for college was possible. Today, the tuition costs are so high it is impossible.

Listening to students across the State of Connecticut, I have heard their stories. I have listened to the amounts they owe and the levels of interest they have to pay. Each of them,